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REMARKS

Claims 1-6, 11-13 and 15 remain in the case.

Claims 1-2, 4-6, 11-13 and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C 103(a) as being unpatentable over Leonard et al. (5626357) in view of Kawakubo et al. (6065771). Further claim 3 was rejected under 35 U.S.C 103(a) as being unpatentable over Leonard in view of Rahmstorf et al. (6106003).

The rejection of the claims is traversed. Claim 1 requires a break line predetermined by a cross-section weakness, the cross-sectional weakness being a notch commencing at the surface that is attachable to the foam backing and terminating in the material of the decorative film before the side remote from the surface attachable to the foam backing. Claim 1 clearly states that the break line does not completely go through the decorative film. However, the Examiner is citing Leonard alleging that Figure 2 at reference number 28 there is a notch commencing in the first surface and terminating in the film before the second surface. However, as clearly shown in Figures 2 and described in column 2, lines 55-57, the gap 28 extends completely through the film between panel portions 12 and 13. Leonard does not show or disclose a film having a notch starting at one surface and terminating before the opposing surface. Leonard only shows a gap between panel portions 12 and 13 that are later covered with other material.

Further, claim 1 requires that the notch is covered by a welded region of an outer layer of the decorative film consisting of thermoplastic material, wherein the welded region is formed by welded edges surrounding the notch at the surface only. Neither Leonard nor Kawakubo show or disclose this required feature. Leonard states in column 2, lines 60 to column 3, line 8, that the gap 23 is covered by a front surface layer 16 and panel substrate 20. Neither Leonard nor Kawakubo show or disclose a welded region covering the notch as described and required in claim 1. There are no welded regions shown or disclosed in any of the cited prior art.

In addition, claim 1 requires a decorative film having one surface attachable to foam backing. As required in claims 1 and 15 the notch is formed in the decorative film and not in the attached foam backing. In contrast, Leonard shows and discloses a gap in the foam backing (foam core) 12 and 13. The foam core in Leonard is then covered with a decorative film 16. The notch/gap in Leonard would have to be located in film 16 to provide the same features as claimed in claims 1 and 15. Therefore, Leonard does not teach the present invention.

The rejection of claim 15 is traversed for the same reasons as stated supra. Claim 15 requires that the edges of the notch at the first surface are pressed together and welded for covering the notch and for providing a break line within the decorative film

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commencing and terminating completely within the first and second surfaces of the film. As seen in Figure 2 in Leonard, the gap 20 at 8 extends completely through and between portions 13 and 12 of the panel. The edges of notch 28 are not pressed together and welded to cover the notch 28 as required in claim 15, but are instead covered with another layer of material 16 and 20. None of the prior art show the features as required in claim 15. Therefore, claim 15 is believed to be allowable.

The rejection of claim 3 is traversed. Claim 3 requires that the cross-sectional weakness is a row of a large number of individual internal notches following the course of the break line at partially. None of the cited prior art show or disclose this feature. Rahmstorf discloses notches on the rear side of the cover. Rahmstorf does not show or disclose a large number of "internal" notches. Instead Rahmstorf discloses notches commencing and opened from one side of the supporting member 3. The notches 5 in Rahmstorf are not internal as described and defined in the specification and claims 1 and 3 of the present invention. Further claim 3 which is dependant upon claim 1 requires that the notch commences from the surface attachable to the foam backing. In Rahmstorf the foam backing 2 is attached to the support material 3. The notches 5 do not commence in the surface 3 that is attachable to the foam backing 2 but commences on the surface away from the foam backing. Therefore the notches in Rahmstorf are in a completely different location to the internal notches of the present invention relative to the foam backing. Further the notches in Rahmstorf are configured completely differently than the internal notches in the present invention. Even if one was to combine the notches in Rahmstorf with the notches in Leonard one would not have the invention as claimed in claim 3. Therefore, claim 3 is believed to be allowable over the cited prior art.

Inasmuch as claims 2, 4-6 and 11-13 are dependant on allowable claims 1 and 15, then these dependant claims are believed to be allowable also.

In light the aforementioned arguments the claims as listed are believed to be allowable over the prior art. This application should therefore be in condition for passing to issue. Such action is requested.

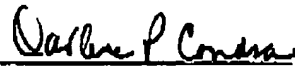
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If the Examiner feels that prosecution of the present application can be expedited by way of an Examiner's amendment, the Examiner is invited to contact the Applicant's attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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